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Kenya Inc: Standing Solidly With Rapist Elders?



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Andrea has an established track record in country analysis, having worked for Global Insight (now Global Insight IHS), one of the largest international country intelligence providers, as Africa analyst for three years. Since leaving Global Insight, Andrea has written on business, economic and political risk issues for, amongst others, Dun and Bradstreet, Africa Practice, African Business, Africa Investor, Afrika-Wirtschaft, Control Risk Group, Oxford Analytica, Risk Advisory Group, and [MarketWatch](#).

Occasionally, Andrea gets asked what she thinks by media like BBC, CNBC, NTV, ITN, Bloomberg, and others. Andrea holds a first degree in business studies, and an MSc in development studies from the London School of Economics (LSE).

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SATURDAY, JULY 13, 2013 - 00:00 -- BY ANDREA BOHNSTEDT

This was an interesting (for lack of a better word) couple of weeks with corporate ethics in Kenya. A few weeks ago, in the Business Daily, Frank Njenga responded to someone seeking advice on how to speak out about having been abused as a teenager. The situation had been made more complicated by the fact that the abuser was now considered a 'respected elder'.

Mr Njenga lobbed a misplaced biblical quote at the woman. And then he went on a lengthy, absurd and highly unprofessional speculation that she had really been making all this up in a strange desire to bring shame upon herself and her husband and destroy her family.



This would have been outrageous 'advice' by any measure. But I read this pretty much around the same time as this news item from the Standard: 'A Kenyan High Court has ordered police to reinvestigate complaints of rape by 11 girls in a landmark case brought by a children's charity on behalf of more than 240 victims of child rape, some of them as young as three years old. (...) (The girls) came to the charity for help after being raped by fathers, grandfathers, uncles, police officers and neighbours. The police rarely investigated their complaints, even locking one girl in a cell after she reported one of their colleagues had raped her (...). Police demanded bribes to investigate rape, refused to investigate unless the victims produced witnesses, and said victims had consented to intercourse, the victims said.'

I still have no words for how angry this made me. How incredibly angry. Digest it: Children as young as three years. Raped. By the very people who should be looking out for and protecting them.

Read the two articles parallel, and your stomach turns. And those rapists get away with it, time and time again: because the system fail (the police are the rapists) and people like Mr Njenga create the environment in which the 'respected elders' will continue being respected while the victims will be silenced. 'Respected elders' standing up for another one?

As I said earlier, I saw little point of engaging Mr Njenga – someone who gives such 'advice' has chosen his side, and you don't need to engage with every reactionary who is muttering away in the corner of the bar.

I was looking at the role of organisations here. First of all I was stunned that the Nation Media Group would run this article, just like that. Was there nobody who looked at it before it went to print?

I emailed the NMG about this. Four very senior people. Repeatedly. They hmmmmed and hahed, and admitted in private emails that yes, this hadn't been ideal.

But that wasn't the point: this wasn't about telling me. The reason why I kept emailing them was because the NMG is the largest media group in the region and it is an outrage that it carries such reinforcement for rapist 'elders'.

But I didn't just try to speak to the NMG: Mr Njenga is also the chairman of AAR. I happen to have been a client of AAR for several years.

So I emailed the CEO to inquire whether, if I ever sought medical help after sexual abuse, I'd be confronted with Bible quotes and accusations of lying.

Whether that was, in fact, corporate healthcare policy. Mr Gakunju weaseled out of this by responding that he had forwarded my

inquiry to Mr Njenga and I should wait for his response. So far, deafening silence.

I also asked the Kenya Medical Board's CEO, Dr Yumbia, for a comment. Repeatedly. Deafening silence. And then I emailed the head of the Psychiatrist Association, Dr. Mutiso. Deafening silence.

After a couple of weeks of pestering, Business Daily put this on their Facebook page: 'BUS NESS DAILY has noted the controversy and offence caused to some by Frank Njenga's column. We would like to state that Nation Media Group, and Business Daily in this instance, has a firm policy of non-discrimination, and in no way condones a disrespectful and insensitive treatment of victims of sex abuse.

Dr Njenga's views are those of a columnist, and in no way represents NMG's views. We sincerely and deeply regret and apologise for the pain and embarrassment caused. Thank you.'

So: we print stuff that people send us, but we don't read it. We just print it. Don't hold us responsible for content?

That's the best you got? Seriously now?

So there we are. Kenya Inc, presumably fathers, husbands, uncles: standing solidly with rapist elders. This keeps happening on such a broad scale not just because there are people who will actively back and protect the rapists, but also because the good guys don't have the you-know what to speak up.

In somewhat related news, I'm keen to hear from a reputable health insurance company with no implicit or explicit policy of treating anyone seeking help after sexual abuse with bible quotes and accusations of lying and sluttiness. I don't smoke, I drink very little, I exercise regularly, I mostly eat healthily. Also, I'm a woman, so I don't fall sick with the wildly dangerous man flu. Anyone?

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